CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Mr. Chancellor, I have the honour to present to you Norman Cohn, noted author, distinguished research director, and a man dedicated to studying the myths by which powerful states have consigned whole categories of innocent human beings to annihilation.

From 1933 to 1939, he was Scholar and Research Scholar of Christ Church, Oxford, graduating with First Class Honours in the School of Medieval and Modern Languages. During the war, he served in the Queen's Royal Regiment and in Intelligence. In 1946, he embarked on an academic career, teaching French literature and writing his first major book, THE PURSUIT OF THE MILLENNIUM, a pathbreaking work in which he examined the tradition of revolutionary millenarianism and mystical anarchism as it developed among the dispossessed populations living on the margins of western European society between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries.

In 1963, he began to organize an international multi-disciplinary research project on the dynamics of persecution and mass-murder. For the next seventeen years, he and his colleagues associated with the Columbus Centre in Sussex University studied the Holocaust and its preconditions, not in isolation, but alongside other mass-murders, bringing to bear on all this material the techniques of historical scholarship, sociological analysis, and psychology. In his capacity as General Editor of the Columbus Centre's publication series, Studies in the Dynamics of Persecution and Extermination, he oversaw the publication of seven major monographs, and produced two new books of his own. In WARRANT FOR GENOCIDE, he examined the origins and the impact of the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy and of THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION. In EUROPE'S INNER DEMONS, he inquired into the origins of the great European witch-hunt. Following the publication of WARRANT FOR GENOCIDE, he received the Anisfield-Wolf Award for Race Relations and in 1978 he was made a fellow of the British Academy in recognition of his contribution to historical and social studies.

Running through all three of his major books is a deep concern with the same phenomenon--the urge to purify the world through the annihilation of some category of human beings imagined as agents of corruption and incarnations of evil. Today, his publications and the research studies he encouraged provide vital foundations of knowledge for those who study the systematic annihilation of millions of European Jews and Gypsies by the Nazis and their collaborators. Since 1980, when Concordia introduced the first university course in tbe history and sociology of genocide, he has aided scholars and students at our university, helping them in their attempt to identify the social conditions and situations in which genocide can and cannot occur.

Mr. Chancellor, it is therefore a privilege to present to you, on behalf of the Senate and by the authority of the Board of Governors, Norman Cohn, that you may confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.

Frank Chalk
Associate Professor of History

June 16, 1985